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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 000812

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DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI (RPORTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/09/2028
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SCUL](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION ORGANIZES PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION TO
PROTEST INELIGIBLE CANDIDATES

REF: A. CARACAS 000514
[1](#)B. CARACAS 000267

Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR VERONICA TORRES
FOR REASON 1.4 (D)

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY. On June 7 the opposition led a peaceful protest to the Comptroller's Office to protest the administrative ruling making 400 public officials ineligible to run for office. The Venezuelan Constitution, however, stipulates that a person can only be barred from running for public office following a judicial ruling. The Comptroller asserted that the list of ineligible officials will remain, while Chacao Mayor Leopoldo Lopez, leading light and barred aspirant for the Caracas mayoral seat, said that the fight to get candidate names on the registry will continue until the mid-August deadline. Larger marches in support of the ineligible candidates are expected to occur in the coming weeks, including one on June 13 to the headquarters of the Organization of American States. The Comptroller's list of ineligible candidates disproportionately affects members of opposition parties, especially up-and-coming leaders. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The opposition march ended a few hundred yards from the headquarters of the Comptroller's Office where members of the National Guard blocked further passage. After briefly rallying the crowd from the top of a pick-up truck, opposition leaders Leopoldo Lopez, David Uzcategui, and Oscar Perez delivered a document outlining the unconstitutionality of the Comptroller's actions to a lower level official. The demonstration was mostly made up of members of the various opposition parties, although students had a significant presence in the march as well.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The Comptroller, Clodosbaldo Russian, said his decision to make certain officials ineligible to run for office would not be lifted, and asserted that the march was a testament to the strength of Venezuelan democracy. Lopez told his supporters he will continue to contest the legality of the measure until the registration period for candidates ends in mid-August. According to Lopez and constitutional experts in Venezuela, the Constitution indicates that a person can only be prevented from running for election following a judicial ruling.

[1](#)4. (C) COMMENT: While the demonstration on June 7 proceeded without incident, Oscar Perez of the National Resistance Movement complained that members of the National Guard and the police obstructed highways preventing persons from the interior from attending the march in Caracas. It has taken the opposition some time to rally around this issue, but it seems to have earned support from important sectors. In the coming weeks and months we expect to see more marches to

protest this issue, particularly if some of the opposition's most qualified candidates continue to be banned from participating in the November state and local elections. END COMMENT.

Downes